

Sample Dialogue: Setting a Limit with a Parent

Teacher: *I saw that you spanked Jesse when she ran away from you.* [Sharing your observation]

Parent: *Every day it's the same thing. That girl never learns. She is going to run off someday and get herself good and lost.*

Teacher: *It can be really scary when she runs away.* [Actively listening]

Parent: *Sometimes I get so scared I don't know what to do.*

Teacher: *It is such an incredible responsibility to be a parent.* [Reframing parent's idea]

Parent: *Yes, and she acts so fearless. I'm just trying to keep her safe.*

Teacher: *I agree with you that it is important for her to learn to be safe in the world.* [Finding common ground]

Parent: *Yeah, but how is she ever going to learn?*

Teacher: *That is what I'd like to talk with you about, both because we have a policy that prohibits spanking at school and because we might be able to figure out some other ways to help her learn.* [Setting limit and asking for ideas]

Parent: *What's wrong with spanking?*

Teacher: *Well, even though spanking can give a child a clear message about a limit, it also teaches the child that hitting is acceptable and doesn't give her any information about why the limits are there and what else she could do. The other problem is that children get used to it after a while, which can cause the punishment to increase.* [Give information] *I'm wondering what else you have tried with her.* [Asking for ideas]

Parent: *Well, I've tried talking and yelling, but neither seems to work.*

Teacher: *It can be frustrating when you tell her something and her behavior doesn't change right away.* [Actively listening] *But talking can be an important part of helping her learn. Are you available later today to meet with me so that together we can come up with some positive limit-setting tools?* [Following through and asking for ideas]

Parent: *I have to work late today. Will tomorrow afternoon work?*

Teacher: *Sure. How about four o'clock in the office? I'll get someone to cover the classroom for me.*